The Early to Later Iron Age transition in the Severn–Cotswolds: enclosing the household?

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Introduction

The nature of the transition in settlement patterns and material culture between the earlier and later first millennium BC has been relatively neglected in recent years. This reflects a wider trend in prehistoric archaeology to downplay the importance or even existence of 'transitions' (Needham this volume). This paper seeks to address some of the issues of this transition from the perspective of the Severn–Cotswolds region.

Settlement and landscape change in the mid first millennium BC is frequently explained in terms of the growth of ever larger social units dominated by hillfort communities (e.g. Cunliffe 1984a; 1991). Such models tend to see change as 'top-down'; relating to the growth of powerful groups subordinating others, whilst essentially operating within the existing social discourse, rather than marking new social developments. Because the Severn–Cotswolds is close to Wessex and has similar features, such as hillforts, the region has tended to be placed within analogous settlement models without closer examination of the regional archaeological record (e.g. Cunliffe 1984b; Darvill 1987; Clarke 1993). This proximity to Wessex has also meant that the recent stress on regionality in British Iron Age studies (e.g. Gwilt and Haselgrove 1997; Bevan 1999) has largely by-passed the Severn–Cotswolds.

These regionally orientated studies have generally shied away from broader, narrative explanations of settlement and social change (cf. Gerritsen 2003, 11). In reaction to this, a number of authors have shown how taking a long-term perspective can often illuminate broader changes in the nature of community organisation (e.g. Pope 2003; Gerritsen this volume). The meaning of the quantity and nature of material culture surviving from different periods has also been receiving attention, but, for the British Iron Age, the focus has generally been on the social implications of the increase in material at the end of the period (e.g. Hill 1997; Willis 1997), whilst the contrasts between the earlier and later first millennium BC have received less attention.

This paper seeks to redress the situation, arguing that the archaeological record of the Severn–Cotswolds indicates an important contrast in settlement form and material culture between the Earlier and Later Iron Age.[1] It is suggested that this may be part of a more fundamental change in societies across southern Britain. At the same time, as a result of new PPG16-related excavations, the region can now be studied on its own terms.

The purposes of this paper, therefore, are threefold: to outline the character of the Earlier Iron Age in the Severn–Cotswold region; to define the changes that took place around the fifth–fourth centuries BC; and to suggest that these marked an important development in Iron Age society. I will focus particularly on the apparent shift in settlement form between the first and second halves of the first millennium BC, which relates to important changes in the way that communities redefined themselves at the end of the Early Iron Age. The study area focuses on the Cotswold Hills and the lower Severn valley, including Gloucestershire, parts of southern Herefordshire and Worcestershire, parts of the upper Thames valley and the area formerly covered by Avon (Fig. 1).

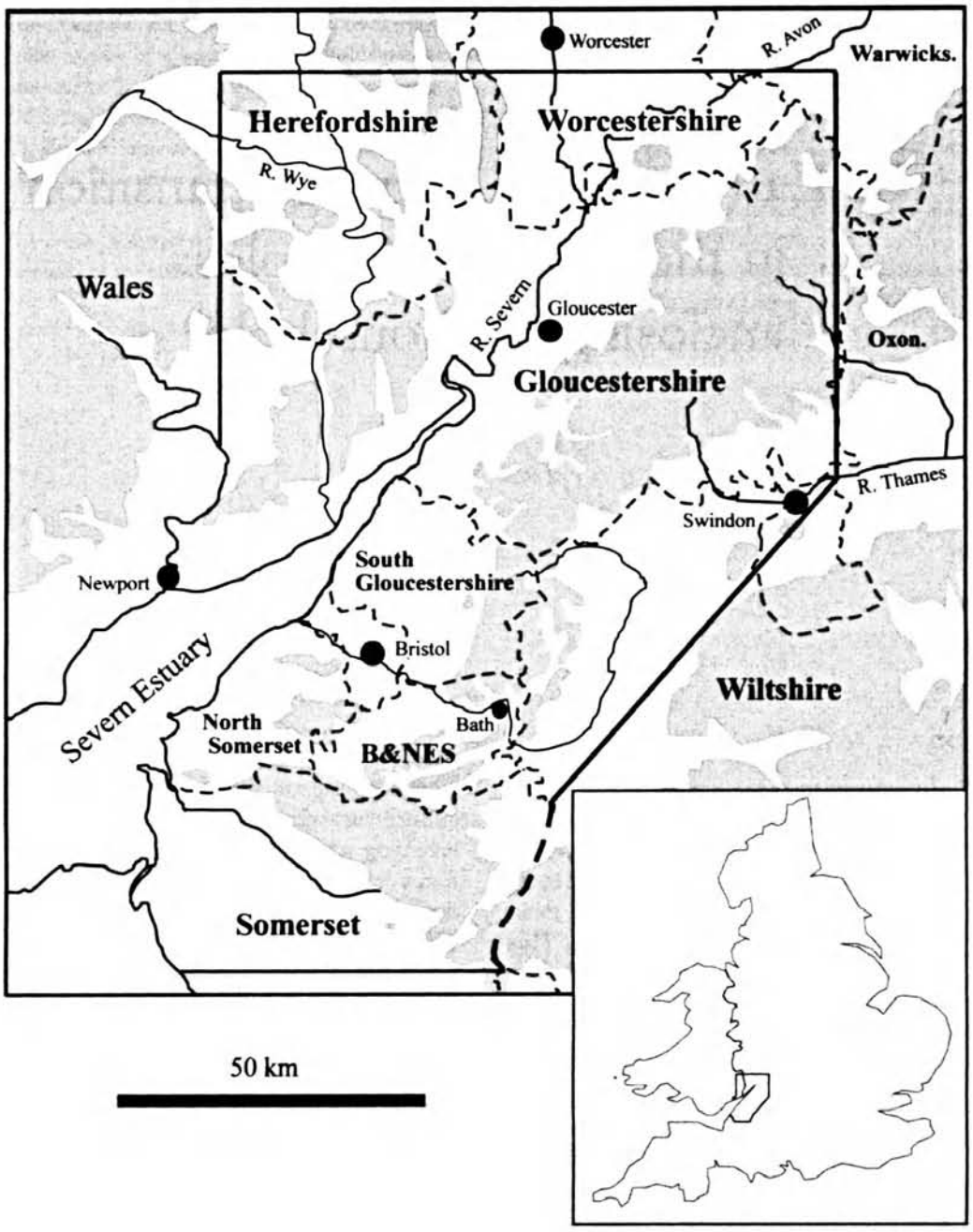


Fig. 1. The Severn–Cotswolds study area, showing SMR authority boundaries.

Recognising the Early Iron Age in the region

In order to reassess the Early–Middle Iron Age transition we need first to establish the nature of Earlier Iron Age settlement in the region. One of the main characteristics of the period is the apparent paucity of evidence compared to later in the Iron Age. In this respect, the region is similar to many other areas of the British Isles outside Wessex (e.g. Willis 1997; Champion this volume; Henderson this volume). Beyond a few well-known sites, such as Crickley Hill (Dixon 1976; 1994), little is known of the nature of settlement, despite a number of large-scale surveys and excavations. The A417/A419 road scheme, for example, revealed numerous Later Iron Age and Roman sites, but nothing of Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age date (Mudd *et al.* 1999).

The scarcity of evidence in the lower Severn and Cotswolds contrasts with the upper Thames valley, which has yielded much more material. Rather than necessarily being a product of denser settlement in prehistory, this may be due to various preservation and recording factors, including better site detection through aerial reconnaissance and large-scale landscape investigations ahead of gravel extraction, in contrast to the more piecemeal interventions on the Cotswolds and in

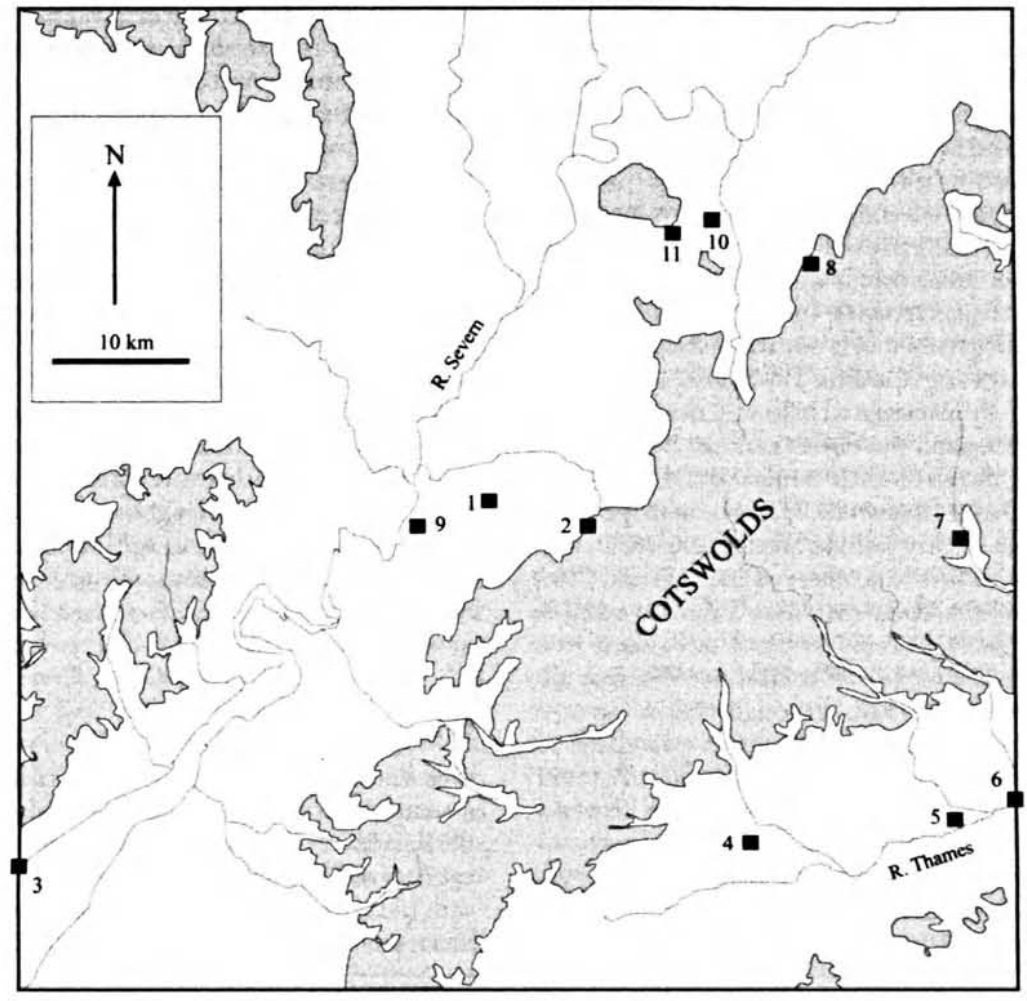


Fig. 2. Location of sites mentioned in the text: 1. Hucclecote; 2. Crickley Hill; 3. Thornwell; 4. Shorncote/Ashton Keynes; 5. Roughground Farm; 6. Butler's Field; 7. Bourton-on-the-Water; 8. Burhill; 9. Crypts Grammar School, Gloucester; 10. Dumbleton; 11. Beckford.

the Severn and Avon valleys. Spreading, unenclosed settlements, like those at Shorncote (e.g. Hearne and Adams 1999) and Reading Business Park (Moore and Jennings 1992), which appear to be characteristic of the earlier first millennium BC, are much more easily recognised in the large-scale excavations required prior to gravel extraction. These also allow more detailed reconstruction of linear boundaries and landscape organisation, as around Lechlade (Allen *et al.* 1993; Boyle *et al.* 1998). The smaller excavations in the Severn–Cotswolds area have been unable to examine landscapes in the same way, although those at Frocester and Hucclecote hint at similar settlement patterns having existed in the Severn valley.

Another difficulty is the chronological framework for the Severn–Cotswolds. The focus of recent excavation has been on the river valleys, especially the Thames and there has as yet been little new work on the region's hillforts. This lack of excavated information has led to an undue reliance on hillfort morphology for dating purposes. Both Marshall (1978) and Darvill (1987) have used this approach to attribute unexcavated sites to the early period, using sites from Wessex as morphological anchors. This has resulted in a mistaken confidence that the process of social development in the Earlier Iron Age is well understood, when in reality the underlying chronological model may be completely inappropriate.

In an attempt to circumvent these problems, this study will take a broad view of changes between the earlier and later first millennium BC, with a particular emphasis on the growing number of available radiocarbon dates. Despite the problems in identifying sites, some more general observations can be made about the nature of earlier first millennium BC settlement in the region.

Hilltop enclosures

A range of hilltop enclosures has been identified as Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age (Fig. 2). The very large enclosures, seen at Bathampton (Wainwright 1967) and Norbury-Northleach (Saville 1983), have been suggested

as one of the earliest forms (Wainwright 1967; Cunliffe 1991, 346), dated to the Late Bronze Age or Earliest Iron Age. Other examples have also been proposed, mainly on the grounds of morphology, as with Maes Knoll (Rahtz and Barton 1963),[2] or of limited artefactual evidence, such as the Late Bronze Age hoard at Nottingham Hill (Hall and Gingell 1974). With so little information, it is too early to be sure whether these sites are really earlier than other hillforts like Crickley Hill, or whether we are inadvertently invoking an evolutionary model of development that is not altogether appropriate to the study area (e.g. Cunliffe 1991; 2000).

The most fully investigated hillfort, Crickley Hill, was first occupied around the eighth century BC and been abandoned in the sixth–fifth century BC (Dixon 1994, 107; 220).[3] Other Cotswolds hillforts with probable Early Iron Age activity include Shenberrow (Fell 1961), Burhill (Marshall 1989) and Cleeve Cloud (Saville 1984), whilst Stow-on-the-Wold may have been occupied by the Late Bronze Age (Parry 1999). A few sherds from Leckhampton (Champion 1976; Elsdon 1994) may also imply early activity there, although this is open to interpretation. An early phase has been postulated for Midsummer Hill (Field 2000, 17), but Stanford's (1981) excavations only revealed material that is best viewed as of 'Middle' Iron Age tradition.

Hillforts with Early Iron Age activity are also well represented in the south of the study area, including larger enclosures such as Little Solsbury (Falconer and Adams 1935) and Bury Wood (Grant-King 1967). The cross-ridge dykes at Kings Weston (Rahtz 1956) and Worlebury may also be early and pre-date the Early Iron Age enclosure at the former and the Later Iron Age hillfort at the latter. Smaller well-defended hillforts exist at Budbury (Wainwright 1970) and Burledge (Apsimon 1977), although systematically excavated sites are poorly represented. Other hilltop enclosures have been postulated as early, largely on morphological grounds, as in the case of the similarities between Windrush Camp, Gloucestershire, and Chastleton Camp, Oxfordshire (Darvill 1987). The varied morphology of early hillforts, however, cautions against such parallels and suggests it may be better to await dating evidence.

There is some evidence that rectangular structures were prevalent at early hillforts and in some cases may have formed domestic structures (Moore 2003a). Rectangular houses at Crickley Hill (Dixon 1976; 1994), Norbury-Northleach, and Budbury (Wainwright 1970, 121), allied with the much earlier (*c.* tenth century BC) rectangular post structures from Redwick in the Gwent levels (Bell *et al.* 2000, 292), may suggest a localised Late Bronze Age tradition for such buildings.

Previous analyses of the regional Iron Age have suggested that many hillforts possess Early Iron Age or Late Bronze Age unenclosed phases. Marshall (1978), for example, argued for such phases at Salmonsbury, Shenberrow and Crickley, and the same has been proposed for Bathampton (Wainwright 1967) and Nottingham Hill. In all cases the evidence is limited and open to debate. At Crickley, the unenclosed phase appears to be a laying-out bank (Dixon 1994) and that at Shenberrow is also uncertain. The evidence from Bathampton is similarly limited, but the few post holes uncovered could conceivably represent some form of unenclosed phase prior to the enclosure of the hilltop. At Salmonsbury, the evidence is limited to possible early sherds from beneath the rampart. Recent excavations to the west of Salmonsbury (see below) imply that the earlier unenclosed settlement may have spread as far as this area, although Dunning's excavations (1976) appear not to have revealed Early Iron Age features. The Early Iron Age pottery from outside the ramparts at Burhill (Marshall 1989) is perhaps more convincing as evidence for an unenclosed phase or of activity beyond the main enclosure, but emphasises the need to look beyond hillfort boundaries in order to detect unenclosed phases or extra-mural settlement.

Non-hillfort settlement

Our knowledge of non-hillfort settlement has, until recently, been very poor, but has begun to improve in the last fifteen years as a result of the growth in rescue excavation. The evidence, however, remains fragmentary, with older excavations frequently lacking crucial details about the nature or context of finds, whilst more recent evaluations produce tantalising but limited information.

In the upper Thames valley, Roughground Farm has an Early Iron Age unenclosed roundhouse, situated within a field system (Allen *et al.* 1993, 9). A similar site can be seen at Butler's Field (Boyle *et al.* 1998) with another unenclosed roundhouse associated with a pit alignment and linear boundaries; nearby at the Loders, there is further activity (Darvill *et al.* 1986). The Late Bronze Age site at Shorncote consists of unenclosed roundhouses representing a number of phases of settlement that shifted across the gravels (Hearne and Heaton 1994; Hearne and Adams 1999), and closely resembles the early first millennium BC field systems and unenclosed settlements known from further east in the Thames valley (Moore and Jennings 1992; Yates 1999; 2001). At Bourton-on-the-Water, recent small-scale investigations have located a number of probable Early Iron Age features (e.g. Nichols 1999). The available information is as yet limited, but the site appears to comprise an unenclosed settlement located on a low gravel ridge in the floodplain of the Windrush valley.

There is growing evidence of earlier first millennium BC land use in the lower Severn and north Avon valleys, long regarded as largely devoid of settlement at this period. At Hucclecote, for example, four or five post-built roundhouses of Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age date have been excavated (Thomas *et al.* 2003),[4] providing a possible pointer to the type of site that

awaits discovery on the Severn gravels in the future. The site has three radiocarbon dates falling between the eighth–fifth centuries BC,[5] implying that occupation may have overlapped with Crickley Hill, although the problems with calibration at this period preclude certainty. Hucclecote appears likely to represent the same type of unenclosed, spreading settlement as Shorncote and Roughground Farm.

Other potential Early Iron Age activity is seen at Sandy Lane, Cheltenham (Leah and Young 2001); Saintbridge and Crypt Grammar School, Gloucester (Dunning 1933; Darvill and Timby 1986); and Ireley Farm, Stanway (Saville 1984, 154). At Dumbleton, a number of Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age pits are thought to represent an unenclosed settlement (Coleman and Hancocks forthcoming). Frocester also has some evidence of Early Iron Age activity including a trackway and a Late Bronze Age linear (Price 2000). At Beckford, the situation is less clear. Whilst some claim an Early Iron Age phase (Napthan *et al.* 1997, 18), the enclosures excavated by Britnell and Oswald are of Later Iron Age date; there was a Late Bronze Age linear on Britnell's site, but no indisputably Early Iron Age features (Oswald 1970–2; Britnell 1974). Finally, to the west of the Severn, an unenclosed Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age settlement was uncovered at Thornwell (Hughes 1996). The pottery and a radiocarbon date imply that the site is of similar date to Crickley and Hucclecote.

From this limited evidence a broad pattern nonetheless emerges. Late Bronze Age sites and linear land division are reasonably plentiful on the river gravels; activity then falls away in the Earlier Iron Age, only to increase again in the Later Iron Age, in the form of enclosure, as at Wyre Piddle (Napthan *et al.* 1997) and Beckford. Either the lack of Earlier Iron Age sites is genuine, or material of this date is much harder to recognise, whilst Late Bronze Age and particularly Later Iron Age sites are more visible. In the current state of knowledge, the latter possibly may well be the more likely.

Early Iron Age material is notably rare on the Cotswolds, even in comparison to the Severn and Avon valleys. The lack of Early Iron Age sites on the route of the A417/A419 has already been mentioned. A La Tène I brooch and other finds imply the presence of a site of fifth or fourth century BC date at Winson (Cox 1985). Other possible sites include Kings Beeches, Siddington, and Barnsley Park (Saville 1984, 154), but in each case the evidence is restricted to a few poorly dated and provenanced sherds. A radiocarbon date of 770–520 cal. BC from charred timber in a roundhouse post hole at The Park, Guiting Power, seems overly early for a conjoined enclosure of this type; on other evidence this site is no earlier than the fifth or fourth centuries BC (Marshall 1995).

Few Later Iron Age sites on the Cotswolds show evidence of continuity from the earlier period (e.g. Marshall 1995; Parry 1998; Mudd *et al.* 1999); most of the enclosed settlements, for example, appear to emerge around the fourth century BC (see below). The present evidence appears to indicate that there was limited Early Iron Age settlement on the Cotswold plateau. Although the lack of early material may partly be explained by the nature of the recording, it could also reflect a real lack of activity on the Cotswold Hills prior to the Later Iron Age. Such gaps in occupation have been noted elsewhere and may indicate that in some areas of southern Britain, Early Iron Age settlement, in common with Late Bronze Age activity (Yates 2001), tended to focus on the main river valleys.

Apart from the enclosed hilltop sites mentioned above, the region appears to lack the kind of enclosed settlements of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age date found in Wessex (Cunliffe 2000, 152) and which occur in the Severn–Cotswolds in the Later Iron Age. To the north of the study area, the enclosure at Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Warwickshire was initially attributed to the Late Bronze Age (Bateman 1976), but has since been reinterpreted as Late Iron Age (Hingley 1996).

To the south and east, Early Iron Age enclosures do occur, including the D-shaped example at Longbridge-Deverill Cow Down (Hawkes 1994). The recently excavated enclosure at Groundwell West is of Early Iron Age date (Walker *et al.* 2001), and yielded pottery forms that compare with phase 3b at Crickley Hill (Elsdon 1994). This suggests a date spanning the sixth–fifth centuries BC (*ibid.*, 43), with the enclosure going through a number of modifications. Although the site appears chronologically discrete from those further to the north, the overall sequence appears to be broadly similar, the first, early phase unenclosed; the final phase a small D-shaped enclosure, matching the emergence of the multivallate enclosure at nearby Groundwell Farm around the fifth century BC (Gingell 1981). This could support the hypothesis of a more general transition from unenclosed to enclosed settlement taking place in the middle of the first millennium BC.

Land division

The linear ranch boundaries so familiar from Wessex are not as apparent within the Severn–Cotswold study area. There is, however, growing evidence from all parts of the region that by the Late Bronze Age the landscape was being divided up. The Late Bronze Age ditch from Frocester has been shown to extend for some hundreds of metres across the gravel terrace (E. Price pers. comm.), and similar linear boundaries are know from south Worcestershire, at Beckford (Britnell 1974) and Wyre Piddle (Napthan *et al.* 1997).

In the upper Thames valley, Early Iron Age pit alignments are well represented at Ashton Keynes (Hey 2000) and around Lechlade, at Butler's Field (Boyle *et al.* 1998) and the Memorial Hall (Thomas and Holbrook

1998), along with linear land divisions at Roughground Farm (Allen *et al.* 1993) and Butler's Field. Boyle *et al.* (1998) have convincingly argued that these linear boundaries combined to form organised landscapes on the gravel terraces. A number of other linear ditches and field systems have been suggested to be of Late Bronze Age date, such as Shire Ditch – traditionally thought to be medieval in date (Bowden 2000; Field 2000, 17).

These linears point to a significant level of landscape organisation by the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and imply that many of the settlements were integrated into complex systems of land division. Growing evidence from both the Thames and Severn valleys implies that the gravel terraces in particular were being divided up by a variety of linear boundaries and that these may have formed complex field systems (cf. Yates 1999; 2001; Bradley and Yates this volume). This reflects the pattern noted by Shotton (1978) and Brown (1982) of land clearance around the end of the Late Bronze Age.[6]

Overview of settlement and landscape in the earlier first millennium BC

Despite the limited nature of the evidence, some broad generalisations can be made about earlier first millennium BC settlement. The settlement record appears generally to comprise enclosed hilltop sites, some of which may have had earlier unenclosed phases, and a variety of unenclosed settlements along the main river valleys. There appears to be little evidence of smaller enclosed settlements from this period.

In the major valleys, at least, the landscape was already divided up in many places by the Late Bronze Age, with an apparent focus of settlement on the gravel terraces. Unless we can envisage a longer continuum from the Late Bronze Age to the 'Middle' Iron Age, many sites appear, however, to show a hiatus of occupation in the Early Iron Age, a pattern also noted in the Thames valley (Lambrick 1992, 83). In some cases, this may be due to a failure to recognise sites, either owing to the need to push the chronologies of pottery types beyond their current boundaries, or – perhaps more likely – to the ephemeral nature of Early Iron Age activity.

The potential invisibility of whole periods as a result of adopting inappropriate excavation strategies or taking a myopic view of the evidence should not be underestimated. Until the 1960s the Severn and (north) Avon valleys were thought to have been uninhabitable marsh in the Iron Age (e.g. Hencken 1938, 1), but these areas have since yielded plentiful evidence for Later Iron Age activity, primarily in the form of cropmarks (e.g. Britnell 1974; Dinn and Evans 1990). Due to the lack of enclosures, geophysics and aerial reconnaissance may not be as useful for finding earlier first millennium BC sites, a problem which the presence of alluvium covering the site at Hucclecote (Thomas *et al.* 2003) and those in the Avon Levels (Gardiner *et al.* 2002) can only compound.

In both the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, the emphasis in the river valleys seems to be on unenclosed sites and on creating field boundaries at the expense of defining the domestic sphere. Field boundaries occur in the form of both linear ditches and pit alignments, whilst the corresponding lack of boundaries around roundhouses and settlements is notable.

The Early to Later Iron Age transition

This earlier settlement pattern is in marked contrast to the Later Iron Age. Fundamental changes seem to have taken place in all forms of society around the fourth century BC, with settlement in all areas becoming much more visible, coinciding with the use of the 'Middle' Iron Age wares, including Malvern stamped pottery.

By the fifth century BC, the early hillforts such as Crickley Hill had been abandoned (Dixon 1994), but around this time and slightly later, a new group of hillforts emerged in their place. A radiocarbon date from the base of the main ditch at Uley Bury (Saville 1983) suggests that it was established around the fourth century. Pottery and radiocarbon dates from Conderton (Thomas 2005), Bredon (Hencken 1938), Stokeleigh (Haldane 1975) and Midsummer Hill (Stanford 1981)[7] amongst others, suggest that they too emerged in the fifth or fourth centuries BC.

Around the same time, the rectilinear, and other, enclosure forms, which are such a characteristic feature of the Iron Age in the Cotswolds and West Midlands, also appeared (Fig. 3). The radiocarbon dates from enclosures in and near the region suggest that they emerged no earlier than the mid–late fourth century BC and continued throughout the Later Iron Age (Fig. 4). Moreover, several enclosures have yielded 'Middle' Iron Age wares from their initial phases, indicating that this type of pottery was already in circulation when enclosure occurred; they include Frocester (Price 2000) and Guiting Power (Saville 1979) in Gloucestershire; Wyre Piddle (Napthan *et al.* 1997), Beckford I and II (Britnell 1974; Oswald 1970–72) and Brant Farm in Worcestershire; and Cradley in Herefordshire (Hoverd 2000).

The 'Middle' Iron Age pottery in question comprises a variety of local (usually) limestone-tempered wares and regional wares from the Malvern area (Peacock 1968; Morris 1985). Morris suggested a date in the fifth to fourth centuries BC for the earliest Malvern wares, but the growing number of radiocarbon dates for 'Middle' Iron Age pottery, including the Malvern wares (Fig. 5), suggests a slightly later date, around the fourth century BC (with use in some cases probably

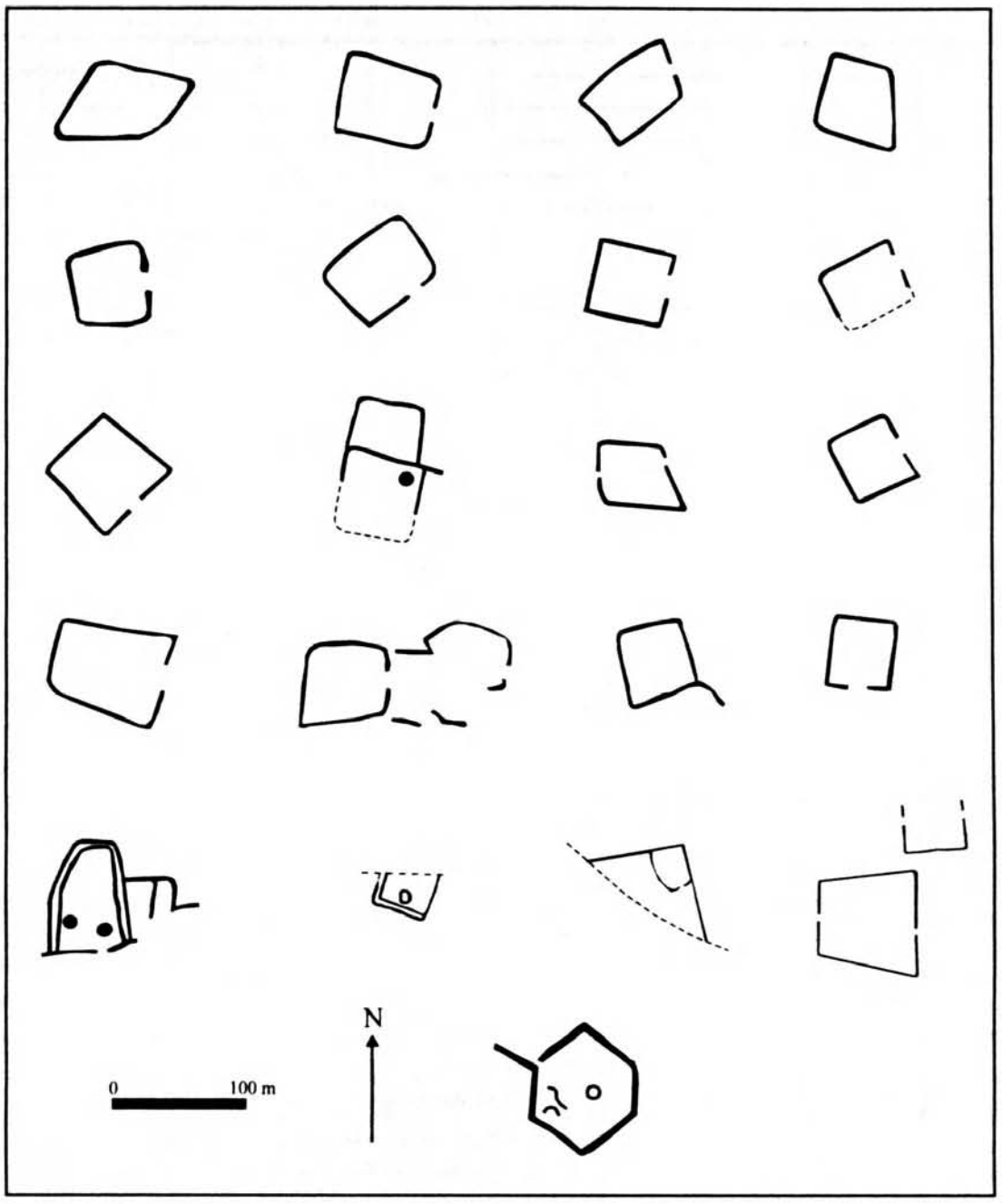


Fig. 3. Plans of known and probable Later Iron Age enclosures from the Cotswolds and Bredon Hill environs.

continuing up to the first century AD). This accords with the revised dating for 'Middle' Iron Age wares at Danebury, now regarded as emerging between the mid fourth and early third century BC (Cunliffe 1995, 18). This being so, those enclosures without radiocarbon dates also seem unlikely to be much earlier than the fourth century BC.

The emergence of these enclosed sites was accompanied by other changes including the adoption of storage pits, for which the dating evidence – albeit more limited – also centres on the mid–late fourth century BC (Moore 2003b). Utilisation of marginal areas also appears to become more intensive. Evidence of this includes the buildings at Goldcliff in the Gwent Levels, dating between the fifth and third centuries BC (Bell *et al.* 2000); the emergence of the lake villages at Meare East and West in the third century BC (Haselgrove 1997); and the establishment of sites such as Hallen, possibly slightly later, in the Avon Levels (Gardiner *et al.* 2002).

This is not to suggest that these areas were unexploited in the earlier first millennium BC, as shown by the presence of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age features, including trackways and buildings, in both the Somerset and Gwent Levels (Coles and Coles 1986,

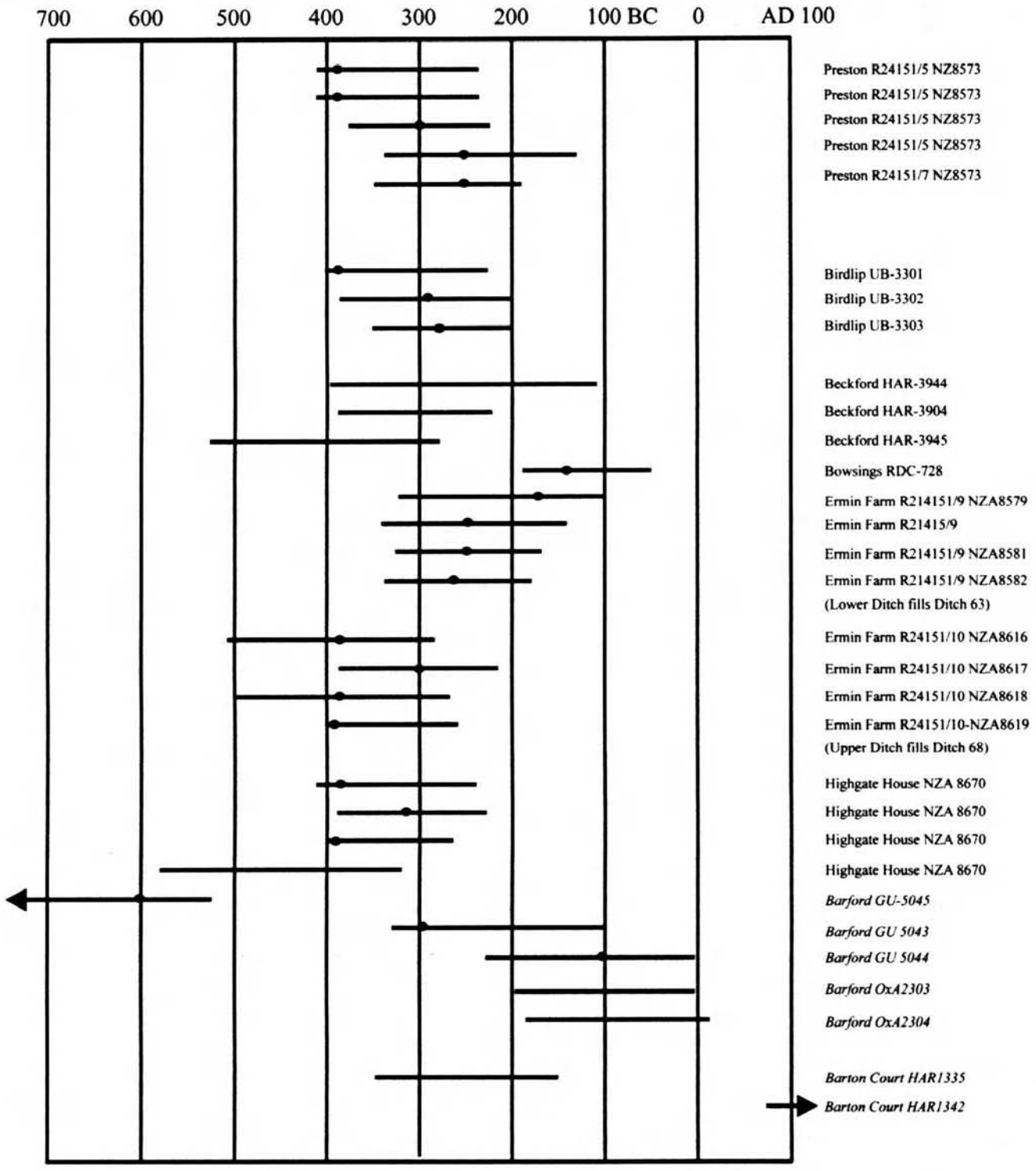


Fig. 4. Calibrated radiocarbon dates from Later Iron Age enclosures (one sigma). Sites in italics are outside the study area.

132; Whittle 1989; Bell *et al.* 2000). However, from around the fourth century BC onward exploitation is far more visible archaeologically. This process was not necessarily sudden, but marks an apparent increase in settlement density and diversity of land use over the Later Iron Age. Such increased exploitation of areas that were used in less visible ways in the Early Iron Age may represent an increased pressure on land and/or inherent social changes.

Another pointer to the extent of the changes is the distribution of findspots of 'Middle' Iron Age pottery, which contrasts markedly with that of earlier first millennium BC forms. In part, this might reflect the long use of the 'Middle' Iron Age wares, which in some

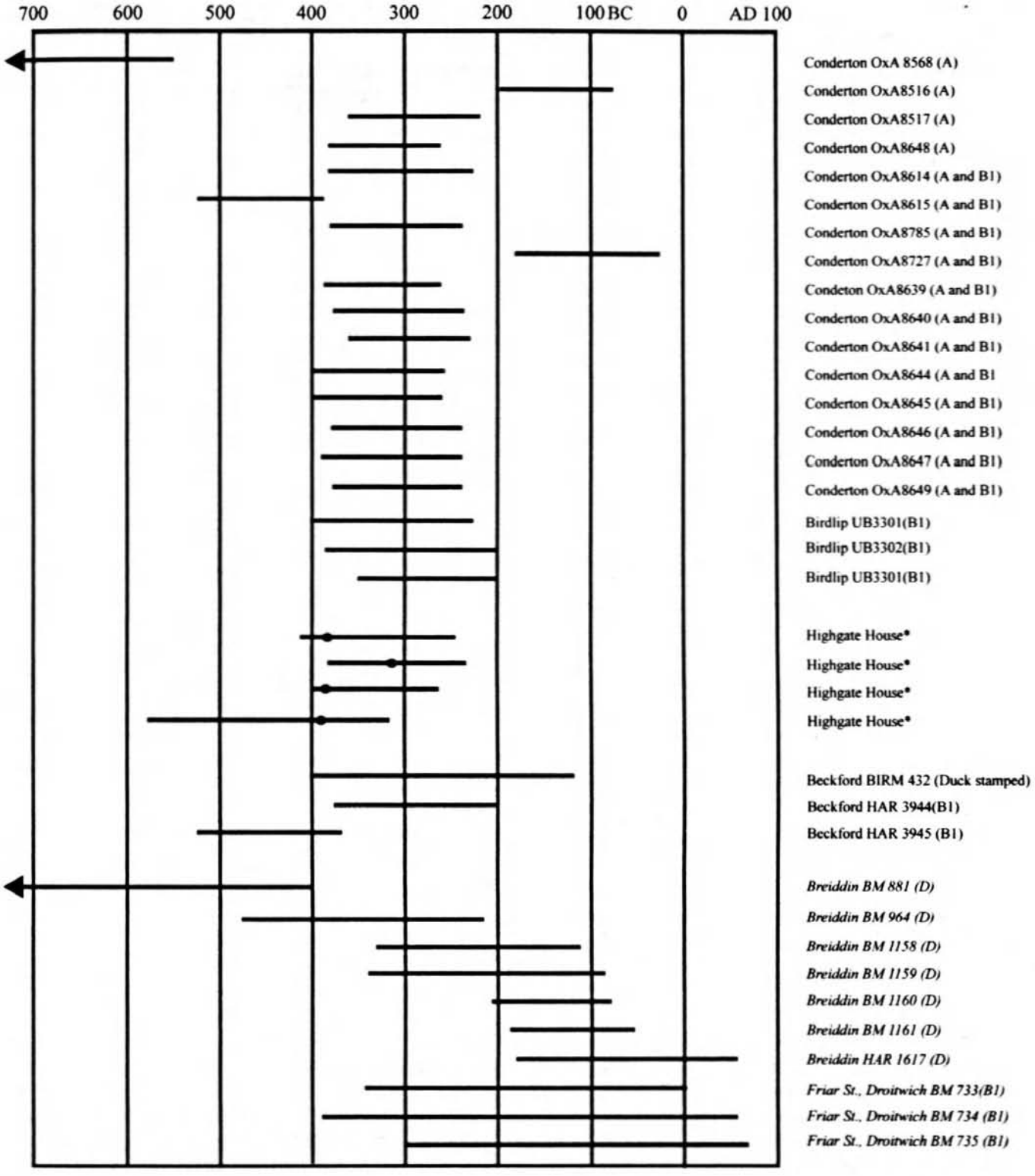


Fig. 5. Calibrated radiocarbon dates associated with Malvern A, B1 and D wares (one sigma). The Highgate House dates are associated with a mixture of limestone- and shell-tempered wares and with some Malvern A and B1 ware.

cases continued in use into the early Roman period (Spencer 1983; Timby 1999; Moore forthcoming). However, the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age finger-impressed wares also had a long period of circulation, potentially from *c.* 1200 BC to as late as the fourth century BC (Moore 2003b), but far fewer sites produce such material.

This dramatic increase in the visibility and extent of settlement and land use in the Later Iron Age must surely be associated with radical social changes. What were these changes and how should we explain them? First however we need to examine the relationship between the Later Iron Age settlement pattern and the landscape of the earlier first millennium BC.

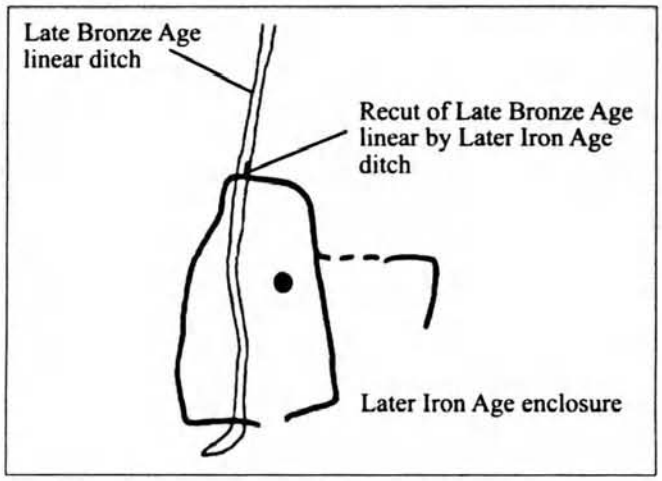


Fig. 6. Frocester, showing the Late Bronze Age linear beneath the enclosure (after Price 2000).

The relationship of later settlement to the earlier first millennium BC landscape

Other evidence suggests that, within this overall shift in settlement form, more complex changes were taking place. Despite the general discontinuity between the early and later periods, there is evidence at a number of locations that the Later Iron Age settlement pattern was often constructed in relation to earlier landscapes. This may be seen in the orientation and organisation of the landscape. As noted earlier, by the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age, much of the landscape had been divided up by linear boundaries. There are indications that this organisation of the landscape may have remained significant in the Later Iron Age and that, despite the radical changes in settlement architecture and possibly social structure, the land divisions remained important, even if no longer strictly 'in use' (Yates 1999; Bradley and Yates this volume).

One possibility is that local communities used these land divisions to affirm their previous control of the landscape. At Frocester, the junction between the linear and trackway of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age date was superseded by a Middle Iron Age enclosure positioned over the linear but oriented the same way (Fig. 6). The enclosure boundary re-used the Late Bronze Age ditch, which was re-cut and linked to the enclosure by a smaller ditch. The enclosure was placed adjoining the trackway, maintaining this as a significant route into the Later Iron Age. Potentially similar relationships exist at Wyre Piddle and Beckford where Later Iron Age enclosures were constructed adjacent to Late Bronze Age linears.

Price (2000, 43) notes the high proportion of Fabric 3 pottery from the junction of the two Frocester linears (Fig. 7). Timby (1999, 126) proposes an Early–Middle Iron Age date for the pottery, which Price suggests might

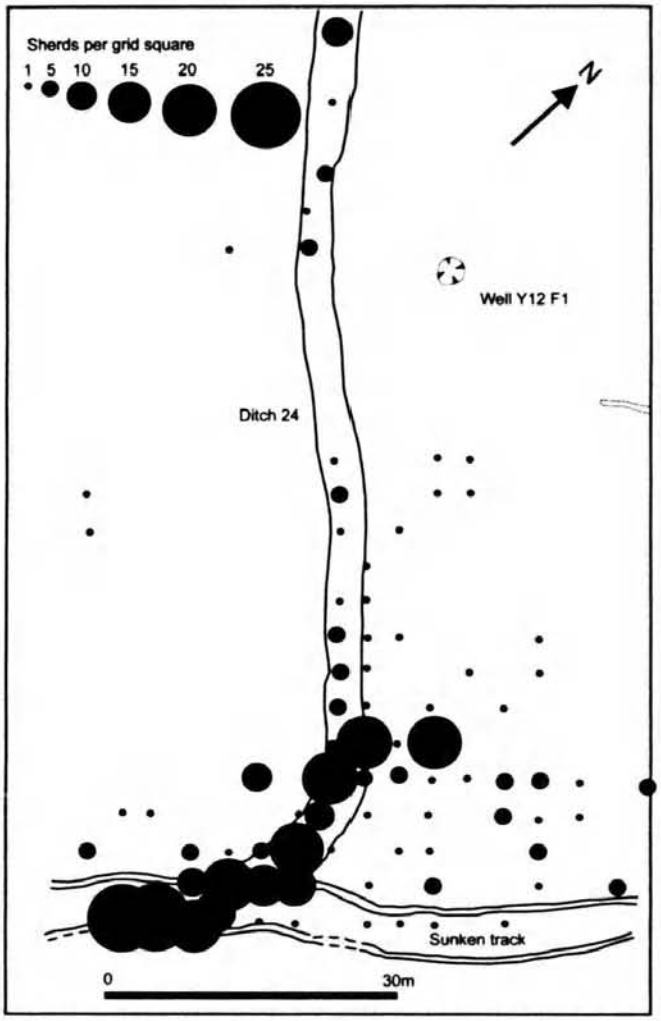


Fig. 7. Frocester: concentration of Early Iron Age pottery and its relationship to the Late Bronze Age linear and Early Iron Age sunken track (after Price 2000).

indicate Early Iron Age settlement beyond the excavated area. An alternative, however, would be to see this find as a special deposit marking a significant point in the landscape, and the placing of the enclosure as showing a conscious awareness and respect for the earlier land divisions.

The placement of Later Iron Age enclosures into the nodes of existing field systems and the importance of such nodes have been noted elsewhere. Taylor's (1997) study of settlement at Maxey in the East Midlands, for example, has shown how enclosures were placed at the junctions of boundaries of earlier field systems. Closer to the study area, the location of the Later Iron Age enclosure at Barford Park, Warwickshire (Cracknell and Hingley 1994) adjacent to an earlier linear may also be significant. Wigley (2002) has noted a similar phenomenon in the Welsh Marches, where a number of enclosures apparently relate to earlier linear boundaries. In such cases, it may point to recognition of the importance of earlier land divisions.

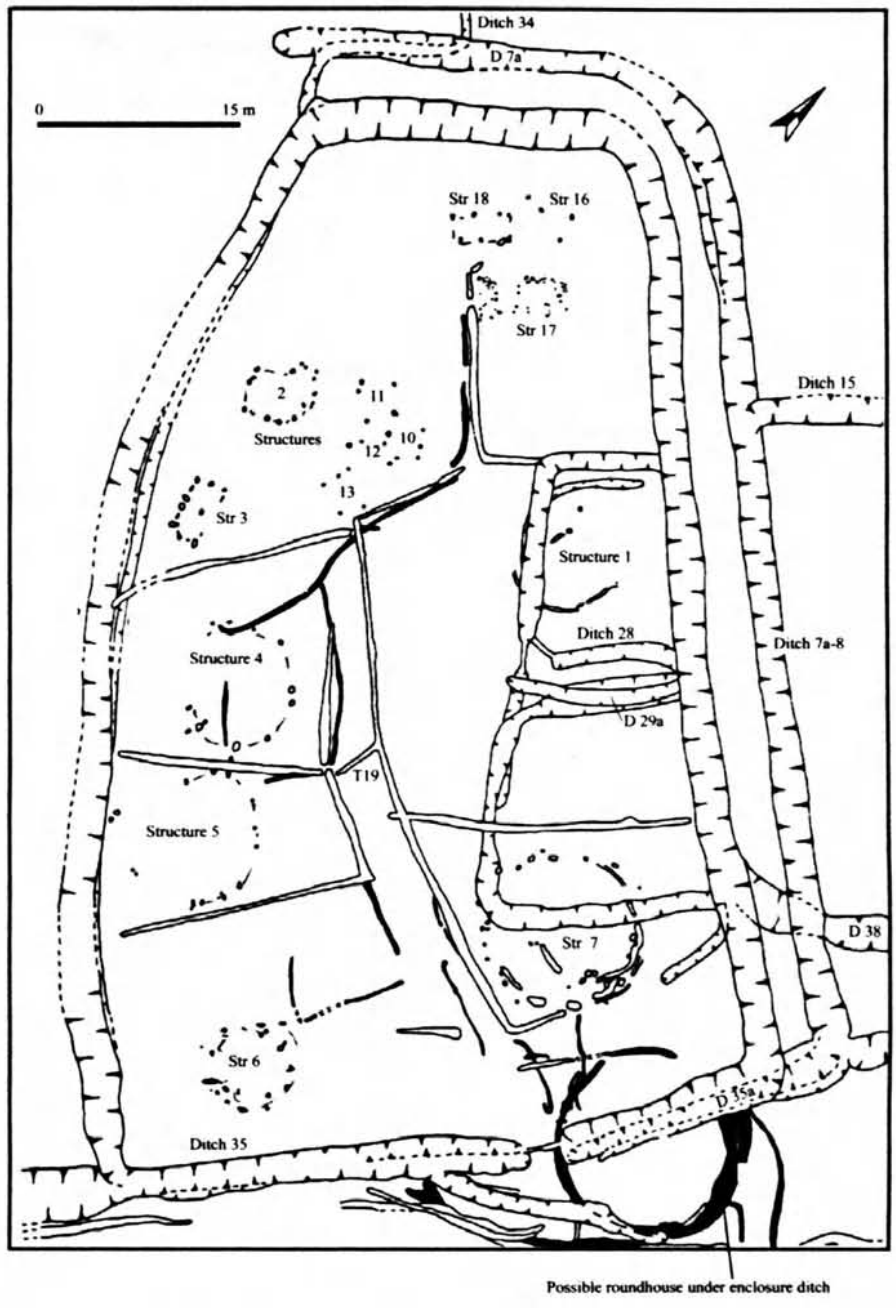


Fig. 8. Frocester: possible roundhouse beneath the main enclosure ditch (after Price 2000, with additions).

In many cases, the dating suggests a hiatus between the two. Nevertheless, even if many of the Late Bronze Age field systems were out of use in the Iron Age, as Yates (1999) has suggested for the Thames valley, many are likely to have remained as visible landscape boundaries. The existence of Middle Iron Age boundary systems respecting Bronze Age barrows as landscape markers, as at Preston (Mudd *et al.* 1999), could support the idea that Bronze Age and Early Iron Age field systems retained a role into the later first millennium BC. In addition, the Frocester evidence implies that certain boundaries were directly reused.

Another site where earlier linear ditches may have retained some significance is Roughground Farm. A crouched inhumation, with a radiocarbon date of 350–40 cal. BC, was interred in the silted up ditch of an Early Iron Age linear field system (Allen *et al.* 1993). No evidence of Middle Iron Age settlement was recovered in the immediate vicinity, suggesting that the burial was a conscious decision by a community living some distance away to re-use this boundary. The boundary may have remained as a significant feature, at least psychologically, if not physically.

In some cases, Middle Iron Age enclosures may not represent entirely new settlements, but rather a more visible manifestation of existing Early Iron Age communities. Frocester may be such an example (Fig. 8). An apparent roundhouse below the enclosure

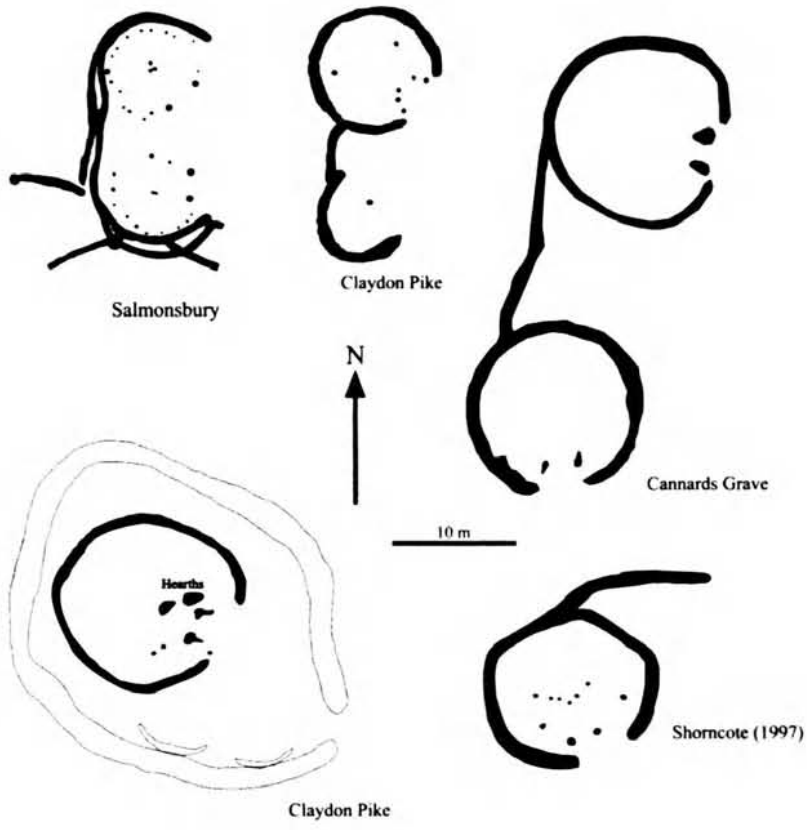


Fig. 9. Later Iron Age 'enclosed' roundhouses in the Severn–Cotswolds (source Moore 2003b).

ditch suggests the possibility of an unidentified unenclosed phase preceding the Middle Iron Age enclosed settlement. Along with the early pottery already mentioned, and a possible Early Iron Age rectangular structure to the west of the site (Price 2000, 48), this might suggest the existence of an amorphous, less well-defined settlement in the area. By around the fourth century BC, this community felt the need to create a more permanent marker in the landscape.

A tendency towards unenclosed earlier settlement followed by the emergence of smallish enclosures in the Middle Iron Age appears to be repeated across the West Midlands. Jackson (1999) and Wigley (2002) have both noted a similar phenomenon further north in the Welsh Marches, and Warwickshire has comparable evidence (Hingley 1996). Enclosures such as Rollright (Lambrick 1988) and Wasperton (Hingley 1996), similar to those seen further south, also appear around this time.

This contrasts somewhat with the pattern noted in Wessex, where a variety of enclosed settlements existed from the early period and a number of hillforts continued to be occupied from the Early Iron Age onwards (Cunliffe 1991; 2000). However, the fourth century BC was also a period of change in Wessex, with the move to 'developed' hillforts and new settlements (Cunliffe 2000, 202). The pattern is by no means uniform in the study area either, with a number of sites in northern Somerset showing evidence of continuity between the Early and Middle Iron Age (e.g. Morris 1988). This may indicate that these processes of change were both restricted to the Severn valley and the Cotswolds, and complex.

Explanations for change

Despite the complexity of the archaeological record, the similarity in developments across the West Midlands may well imply a comparable process of social change taking place across a large part of the region in the middle of the first millennium BC. The growing complexity and diversity of settlement is matched by an increased emphasis on the creation and maintenance of impermeable and more visible boundaries around settlements, contrasting with the unenclosed settlements of the earlier period. There is a shift away from bounding landscapes in the Late Bronze Age to an ever-increasing focus on bounding communities in the Later Iron Age. Such radical shifts in the perceptions of space and layout of settlement must surely reflect a transformation in society and/or community organisation.

These changes are most marked by the widespread emergence of settlement enclosures. However, this new expression of identity may not have been restricted to

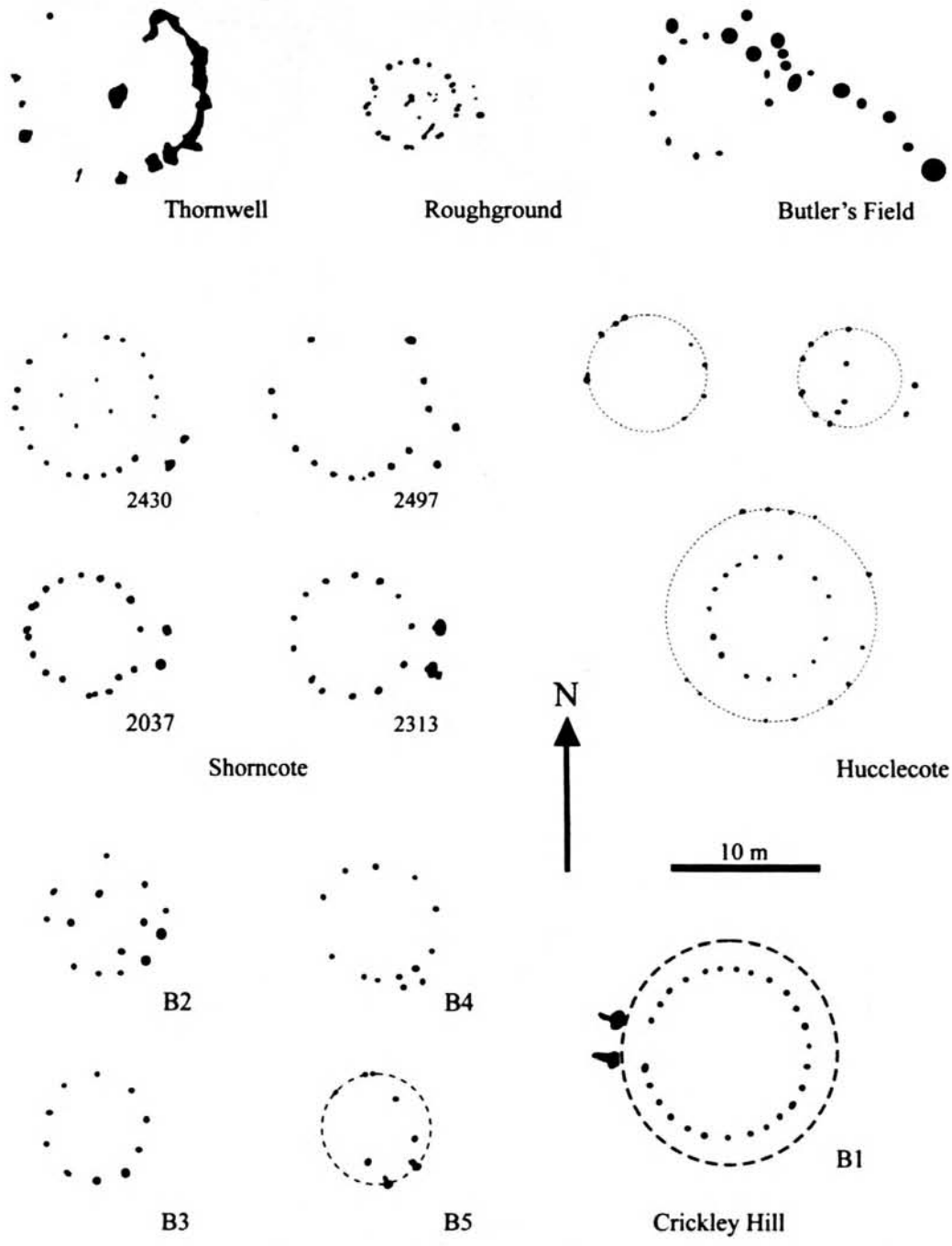
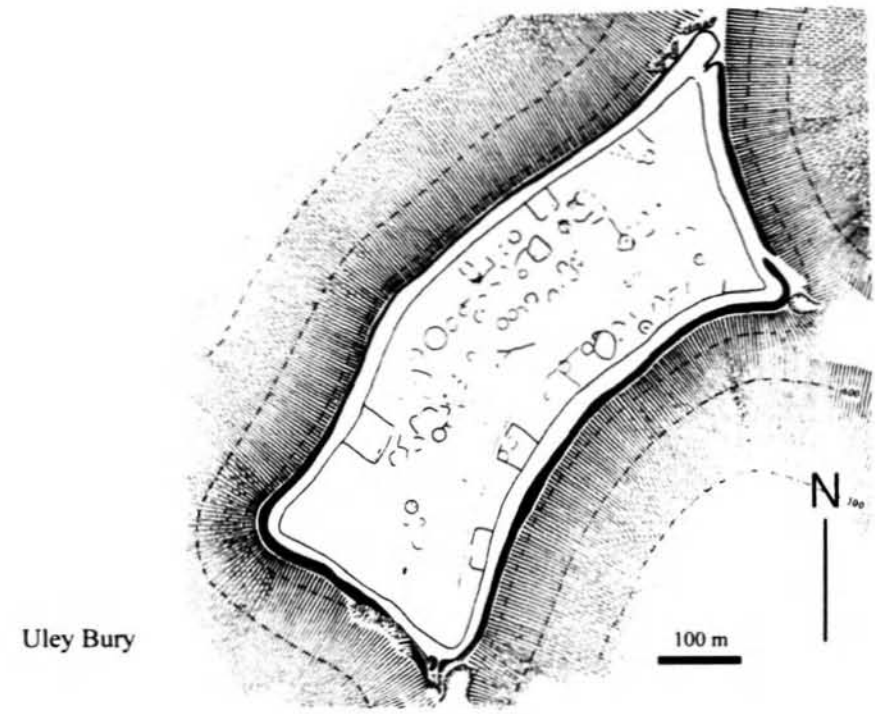


Fig. 10. Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age post-built roundhouses in the Severn–Cotswolds (source Moore 2003b).

the settlement boundaries, being also reflected in the definition of individual houses or compounds within, so-called, unenclosed settlements. Examples of roundhouses within their own enclosure include Claydon Pike House I, in the upper Thames valley (Fig. 9; Hingley and Miles 1984); Hallen in the Severn estuary (Gardiner *et al.* 2002); and, less certainly, Salmonsbury – where at least two of the excavated roundhouses were situated within a conjoined enclosure consisting of a shared drainage ditch (Dunning 1976, fig. 2). Despite their so-called unenclosed nature, the presence of roundhouses defined within marked ditched boundaries contrasts with the predominantly post-built structures of earlier first millennium sites (Fig. 10). This contrast has been observed elsewhere, for example in East Anglia, where a similar chronological differentiation in house form has been proposed (Martin 1999, 69), whilst the emergence of conjoined houses is recognised as being a generally Later Iron Age phenomenon (Bradley 1984, 141).



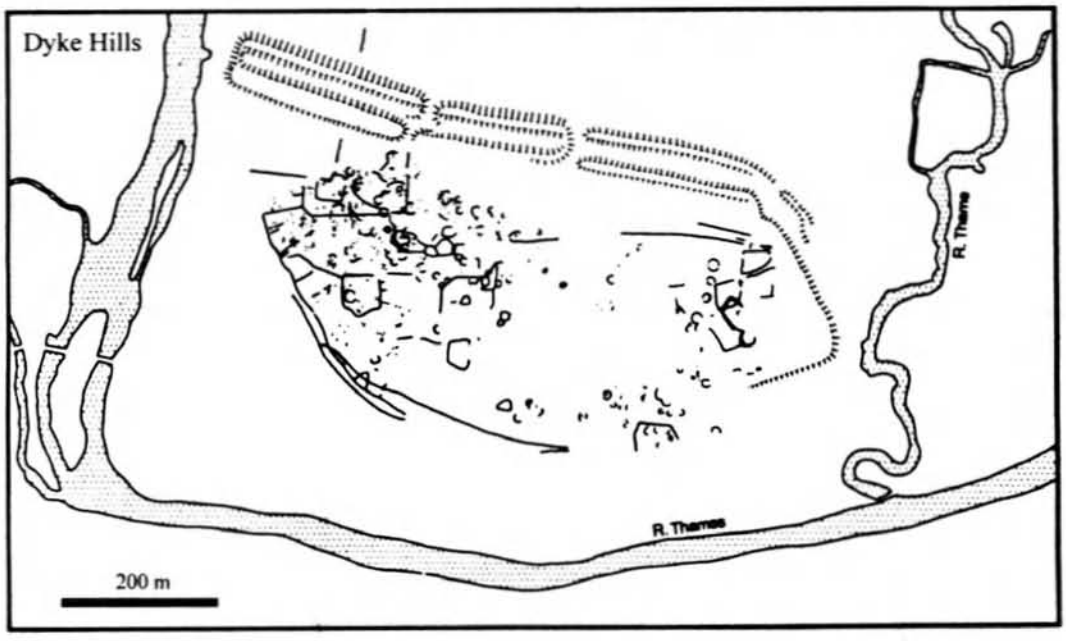


Fig. 11. Plans of Uley Bury (above) and Dyke Hills (below), showing internal enclosures (after Hampton and Palmer 1977; Hingley and Miles 1984).

Increased internal division is also apparently a feature of some Later Iron Age hillforts. At Uley Bury and Dyke Hills (Fig. 11), the cropmarks indicate a variety of internal enclosures and divisions within the settlement. The same perhaps can be seen at Salmonsbury, where there are indications that the interior was divided into distinct units. In contrast, those earlier first millennium BC sites with sufficiently large excavated areas, such as Crickley Hill and Shorncote, show little evidence of internal division between houses.

These internal boundaries indicate that even within these larger 'communal' monuments, activities or household groups required their space to be divided from other parts of the site. Whilst the partitioning of

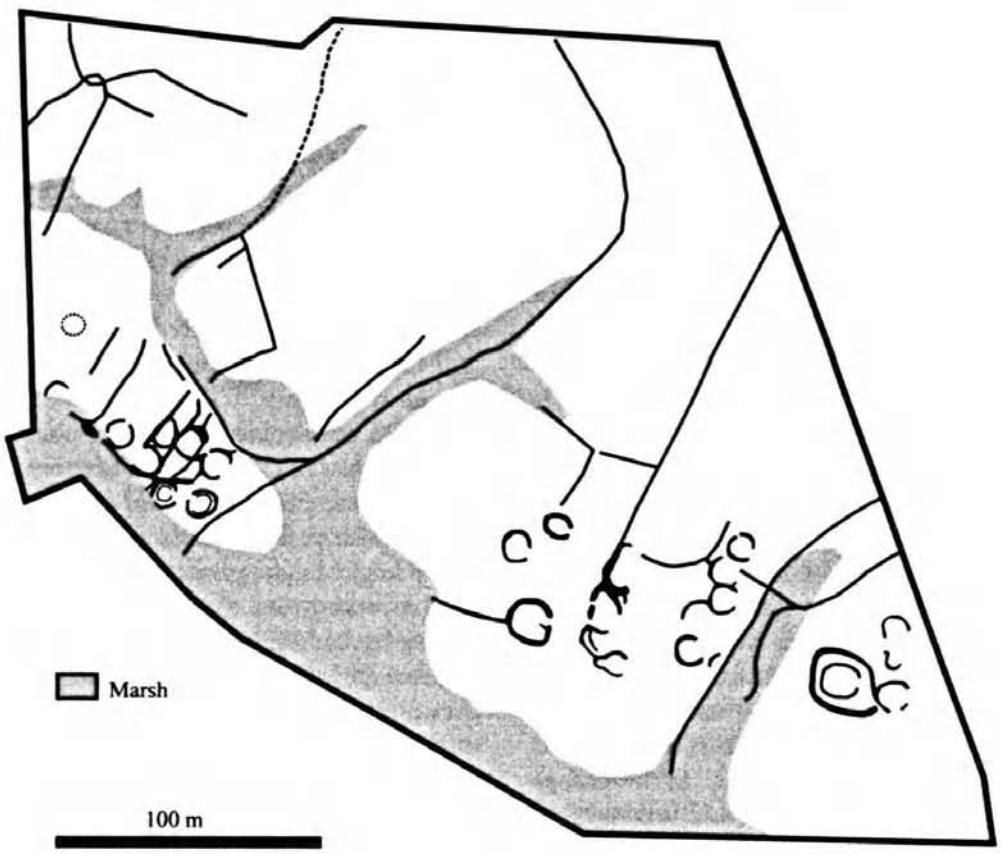


Fig. 12. Claydon Pike, showing 'unenclosed' roundhouses bounded by wet marshy areas (source Moore 2003b).

space within hillforts has been noted elsewhere, as at Danebury, this is usually restricted to broader divisions between storage and housing (Cunliffe 1984a), rather than the splitting up of smaller spaces for particular activities. Such subdivision is perhaps more reminiscent of Late Iron Age *oppida* on the Continent, than of earlier hilltop enclosures.

Whilst these 'enclosing ditches' may have fulfilled functional requirements both on unenclosed sites and hillforts, they are likely to have been bound into social concepts of space (Bowden and McOmish 1987; Hingley 1990). At Claydon Pike House I, for example, the ditches appear larger than strictly necessary. If also full of water, these features would have been an impressive means of dividing up space both physically and psychologically, creating distinct activity areas. If these large drainage gullies were purely functional, one might reasonably ask why earlier circular structures in similar locations on the gravels, at sites such as Shorncote and Reading, did not require such large drainage ditches. The social role of drainage ditches and associated water management has also been noted at Later Iron Age sites in East Anglia where their multiple social, as well as functional, roles have been stressed (Evans 1997).

The location of sites like Claydon, situated on gravel islands bounded by marshy, periodically flooding streams, which may have formed sometimes permeable, sometime impermeable boundaries, further blurs the distinction between 'enclosed' and 'unenclosed' (Fig. 12). On these nominally 'unenclosed' sites, bounding space – both of the wider settlement and of household or activity areas – may in fact have been as important as on 'enclosed' sites.

The defining of individual structures within enclosures, or by gullies on unenclosed sites, can be interpreted as a growing emphasis on defining the household or kin group as a discrete element in the landscape (cf. Hingley 1984) or as defined social units (cf. Bradley 1984, 141). This raises a number of problems with regard to how households were defined, and how a change in household form would be represented in the archaeological record. Not least of the difficulties is whether there is actually a direct correlation between architectural form and social organisation. It could be argued that any such divisions between households in the early period, at sites such as Crickley or Shorncote, may have been cognitive rather than physical, or constructed in non-archaeologically visible ways. However, this does not undermine the fact that from around the fourth century BC, any previously cognitive

boundaries now needed to be more physically expressed.

This change appears to represent a desire to define smaller social spaces more prominently (whether they represent individual 'households' or areas for certain activities), an aspiration that is not so apparent in the earlier first millennium BC. This may relate to an increased tension over land and/or population pressure, themselves bound in to social developments (cf. Willis 1997, 207), including perhaps the growing importance of the household unit. We should, however, be wary of generalising about the nature of the household for any period or region of the Iron Age. The evidence we have makes it particularly difficult to ascertain the role of the household and reconstruct concepts of households or kin groups. Household organisation could have been similar throughout the first millennium BC. The one clear difference is the increased desire to define and distinguish the social unit in the Later Iron Age, or at least in a different way from that of the earlier first millennium BC. The enclosures found in the later part of the period appear to comprise the main habitation unit for relatively small communities, presumably based on the household.[8] This contrasts with earlier settlements, both enclosed and unenclosed, where more households were incorporated, and the single household does not appear to be bounded in such an overt way.

This desire also manifested itself across settlement types, being seen within the bounded area of some hillforts and amongst the structures of unenclosed settlements. This implies that divisions between enclosed and unenclosed settlements, hillforts and non-hillforts were not as clear-cut in the later first millennium BC as is sometimes suggested. The presence of these 'enclosures' within hillforts and unenclosed settlements could well indicate that the process of 'enclosure' was not a defensive measure as a result of increased tension, but the consequence of an increased desire physically to mark social space. Nor need this imply that in the earlier period communities were necessarily egalitarian and in the latter highly stratified. Stratification and hierarchy may well have been expressed in different ways in the earlier period. Conversely, the increased emphasis on household enclosure does not mean that each household was necessarily organised into a rigid hierarchy of settlement and communities, or was socially exclusive from wider society. It may, instead, signify a wider shift of interest in expressing the identity and 'boundedness' of the household or kin group.

The process of constructing boundaries and their physical nature may have had further social implications for relationships within and between communities. Numerous authors have suggested that the construction of enclosure boundaries was beyond the household group (e.g. Gosden and Lock this volume; Sharples this volume) and probably involved a variety of social relations between communities. Activities such as enclosure digging may have been communal projects, gifts of labour or relate to status (Moore 2007). Enclosure, then, need not be an 'excluding' process but in some instances an 'inclusive' one.

Elsewhere, similar changes in settlement and landscape have been interpreted as relating to changes in land tenure, perhaps precipitated by growing pressure on resources as a result of a growing population. Cunliffe (2000), for example, has explained somewhat similar changes in the Danebury environs as marking a shift from a system where land was communally owned and regularly redistributed, to one where land was in private ownership.

Could we explain the process seen in the Severn–Cotswolds in the same way? There is nothing to indicate that land was necessarily held in common in the region in the earlier period, or that ownership was less defined, but it might be suggested that in the later period, land tenure was more firmly expressed in relation to ownership by the household or kin group, and that the appearance of enclosures marked a desire to control these systems more overtly. There is a need, however, to be cautious in using essentially anachronistic terms, such as 'communal' and 'private', when discussing land tenure in the past. Without further work on this, it is very difficult to use the material record to suggest either 'communal' or 'private' systems of lands ownership.

Another element to consider here is the growing importance of regional social organisation. It is around this period that we see an increase in the importance of regionally exchanged pottery and an apparent move towards specialisation of some settlements. Morris (1985; 1994; Morris *et al.* 2005) and others (e.g. Hancocks 1999) have argued for predominantly localised pottery production in the earlier period with a shift towards regionally exchanged pottery in the Later Iron Age. The presence of such pottery on a variety of site types, from small enclosures to hillforts, implies that all communities were to some extent involved in the move to long-distance exchange (Morris 1994). This change marks a shift not just in exchange systems, but also from local (household?) production to manufacture in apparently specialised and specific areas of the landscape (such as the Malvern Hills). As I have argued elsewhere, the growth of these more complex exchange systems may mark the emergence of broader concepts of identity and increased social interaction beyond the local community (Moore 2003b; 2007).

How then can these changes in material culture be related to settlement development? Could we argue that the enclosure of settlements marks a need for communities to define themselves in relation to the wider socio-economic groups expressed by these regional exchange systems, the increased contact with other groups forcing local communities to express their own identity more overtly? Further work is needed to explore the relationships between material culture production and exchange, and the perceptions of social

space and organisation displayed in settlement architecture. What is clear is that radical social and economic changes took place at the end of the Early Iron Age and that these clearly had wide social implications and manifestations, which affected individuals and communities. These cannot be explained purely in terms of population increase or changes in land tenure, but need to explored in more sophisticated ways.

Studying and identifying transitions

This brief examination of the Earlier–Later Iron Age transition has attempted to re-identify the period as one of transformation, which may have been relatively swift rather than gradual or highly localised. Transitions – and the way in which they are identified and perceived – long formed a core focus of research in later prehistory, yet in recent years they have been neglected, with processes of change being regarded as gradual and specific to individuals and communities.

Whilst recent studies have accepted the dynamism of individual communities in dictating change, the explanation of broader patterns in settlement and society has tended to remain the preserve of more processual models (e.g. Cunliffe 2000). Now, however, an increasing number of post-processual archaeologists are also accepting that broader patterns can be identified and may mark more general social changes (e.g. Hill 1997; Willis 1997); unlike some of their predecessors, they also accept that the processes of change may be drawn out over decades or centuries, and that individual communities and regions often reacted in different ways.

The chronological problems associated with the period have often overshadowed the discussion of settlement and social change. The lack of refinement in radiocarbon calibration in the Early Iron Age and vagaries in pottery dating make identifying moments of change difficult. Even so, the creation of a broad chronological framework using such radiocarbon dates and pottery sequences as are available, is often sufficient for more general patterns and trends to be identified and analyzed, as I have sought to show here.

The process of change is not just a chronological process, but also a cultural one. Chronological identifiers are often themselves evidence of wider social change. As Willis (2006) puts it, 'The middle Iron Age is as much a cultural phenomenon as a chronological entity'. The relatively rapid move to new forms and sources of pottery and to new settlement forms and locations in the Severn–Cotswold region in or around the fourth century BC is as much related to social change and the adoption of new life-ways, as it is to social groups 'following' chronological changes.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper has been to highlight the changes in the settlement record between the earlier and later first millennium BC in the Severn–Cotswolds. The picture is undoubtedly complex, with each community and settlement creating and reacting to the processes of change in different ways and at different times. It is by no means a universal process throughout the region and different processes appear to be taking place to the south in Somerset (Barrett *et al.* 2000), Wiltshire, and Wessex (Cunliffe 2000). The variability in the quality of the archaeological record and the problems of pottery and radiocarbon chronologies all make it difficult to create a single narrative.

Despite these issues, it is essential that we re-engage with the broader material and social changes evident in the archaeological record of the first millennium BC. In particular, we need to explain the increased emphasis on enclosure in the Later Iron Age compared to earlier in the period. I have argued that this reflects an alteration in the perceptions of space on the part of regional communities, a shift that was bound into a complex combination of population increase, changes in land tenure and the growth of larger socio-economic systems.

The recognition that similar developments took place across the West Midlands suggests that broader social and economic processes were underway, although at present we have little understanding of their nature and causes, and more work is required to establish quite how much of Britain these affected. It is essential, too, that we extend our enquiries beyond the changes in settlement architecture and land use on which this paper has focused. These are simply the changes that stand out most in the archaeological record. Many other changes took place at this period, in exchange systems, production and household form, all of which may be intimately bound with the developments seen on settlements and in the landscape.

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Notes

1. Due to the long use of so-called 'Middle' Iron Age wares (cf. Hill 1999; Timby 1999; Willis 2001) and the persistence of the relevant settlement forms, the term Later Iron Age will be used here for the whole of the period from the fourth century BC to the first century AD (cf. Haselgrove and Moore 2007)
2. The site has also yielded Early Iron Age pottery. A possible palisaded enclosure identified by a geophysical survey may represent an earlier (Late Bronze Age?) phase.
3. The earliest rampart has radiocarbon dates of 810–570, 490–240 and 680–300 cal. BC (HAR-392–394). Elsdon (1994, 220) regards the pottery as indicating occupation from the eighth–sixth centuries BC. All radiocarbon dates used in this paper have been re-calibrated using OxCal v3.3 and are quoted here at one sigma unless otherwise stated.
4. Which may relate to earlier, possibly Late Bronze Age finds in the area (Clifford 1933, 331).
5. One roundhouse yielded a radiocarbon date of 720–450 cal. BC, whilst a pit associated with the roundhouses has dates of 710–400 and 710–420 cal. BC.
6. Radiocarbon dates from Warwickshire suggest increased alluvium at Pilgrim Lock on the River Avon at 1300–600 cal. BC and, further from the study area, on the River Arrow in Redditch, at 980–810 cal. BC (Shotton 1978). Brown (1982, 102) suggests dates between 1200 and 800 cal. BC for maximum terrace clearance close to Tewkesbury.
7. In arriving at a starting date of *c.* 470 BC for Midsummer Hill, Stanford (1981) places too much reliance on the single radiocarbon date from the first gate. This date has a very wide error margin and such precision is illusory.
8. Although this does not mean they were not bound in to wider social networks and larger 'communities' (Moore 2007).

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